

Spore

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Maasai and wildlife learn to live together



■ More than 100 Maasai families living near the Kitengela Corridor, in Kenya's Nairobi National Park, have been persuaded to allow wildlife access to their land. Previously, they had fenced off land, which is on one of the last great wildlife migration routes of East Africa. As a result, the passage of zebra, antelope wildebeest and other herbivores slowed to a trickle, but lions, faced with a loss of prey, responded by killing Maasai livestock. The International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) was brought in to quantify the value of the wild animals, and help the Maasai decide if an offer of US\$4 (€3.25) per year per hectare for access, made by the Friends of Nairobi National Park (FoNNaP), was worth their while. The ILRI advised that the offer would double the incomes of poor households and help many families pay school fees. ILRI research also showed the grazing of wildlife could benefit Maasai livestock by encouraging the growth of high-quality grass.

The successful Kitengela programme is now being studied by communities facing similar challenges in other parts of the region. As ILRI ecologist Robin Reid observed: "Conventional wisdom says that the best way to conserve wildlife is to separate it from people, but in the East African context, this thinking may be seriously flawed."